

**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**



**Department of Health**

Date: April 15, 2005

To: All Laboratory Personnel

From: Maurice Knuckles, PhD, MSPH  
Director, Public Health Laboratory

Re: Advisory #1: Potentially Hazardous Material in Laboratory Testing Samples

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**Background:** As many of you are aware, on Friday April 8, 2005, the College of American Pathologists reported to clinical laboratories that several proficiency testing samples contained one or more vials of influenza A/H2N2. Laboratories were asked to destroy samples from the identified testing panels.

Viruses of the H2N2 subtype have not circulated since 1967 and persons born after 1968 will have no or only limited immunity against this subtype and therefore a growing segment of the human population may be susceptible to infection by H2N2 viruses. Thus, working with H2N2 viruses could theoretically pose a health risk to laboratory staff born after 1968. No H2N2 component is contained in current trivalent influenza vaccines.

To date, no influenza A/H2N2 human cases among laboratory workers have been associated with distribution or handling of these proficiency testing panels. There is low risk of infection of laboratory workers who use proper biosafety precautions and historic data suggest that it is unlikely that a laboratory worker will have been infected.

**Recommendations:**

Lab personnel who worked with or received these testing samples and have influenza-like illnesses (symptoms include: fever (usually 100°F to 102°F in adults and possibly higher in children) and respiratory symptoms, such as dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, as well as headache, muscle aches, and often-extreme fatigue) within two (2) weeks of handling the sample should:

- a. See his/her physician to be tested for influenza and
- b. **Immediately** notify the District of Columbia Department of Health.

**Further Resources:**

1. CDC Websites:
  - a. <http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/HAN/ArchiveSys/ViewMsgV.asp?AlertNum=00227>
  - b. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip> (Isolation Procedures)
2. District of Columbia Department of Health Bureau of Communicable Disease, (202) 442-9374. If after hours (M-F, 8:15am- 4:45pm), please call (202) 727-1000.